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AUTHOR Smith, Philip M.
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ABSTRACT

The history of the concept of psychological androgyny is very much the history of research on its components, masculinity (M) and femininity (F). Two very different approaches to MF measurement are discernible in the literature: the sex difference approach aims to distinguish men from women reliably, while the sex stereotype approach is concerned with comparing individuals' self-concepts to widely-held beliefs and expectations about men and women, regardless of how valid these stereotypes are. Data from 160 men and women are considered in a study designed to overcome the methodological problems of sex stereotype MF scales now in use, and to investigate the relationship of sex stereotypes to sex differences and male-female relations. Sex stereotypes are found to markedly exaggerate and misrepresent self-rated sex differences. Procedures for examining the correspondence between self-ratings and the way one is perceived socially are suggested as a means of testing the utility of paper-and-pencil approaches to MF measurement. Speech cues (verbal and non-verbal) are among the most important bases for social perception, and are nominated as deserving of further attention in this context. (Author)

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Talking about Androgyny:

Getting There is Half the Fun

Philip M. Smith, University of Bristol

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Paper to be presented at the Welsh Branch of the British Psychological Association Conference on Sex-Role Stereotyping, University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology (Cardiff, Wales, July 13-15, 1977)

Social scientific discussion about the concept of psychological androgyny is only a few years old, yet the topic is already a very popular one in personality and clinical psychology (see Bem, Martyna, & Watson, 1976). Androgyny is most broadly thought of as the display of both masculine and feminine gender identity within the same person (Heilbrun, 1973; Bem, 1974). An androgynous individual is thus neither highly masculine (M), nor highly feminine (F), but shares many characteristics of both categories. If we think of M and F as separate continua, we can depict M, F, androgynous, and low sex-typed individuals as falling into the quadrants formed by their intersection, as in Figure 1.

Ten years ago, there was nothing in the literature to suggest that M and F could be thought of as separate dimensions. They were considered as the two poles of a one-dimensional continuum, as in Figure 2. On all of the several personality instruments that existed for MF measurement, whatever was not scored a M was scored as F, and one's overall MF score was counted as the sum of M minus F responses, or in some equally dichotomous way. Since then there have been several demonstrations of the limitations of such measures, showing among other things, that variability on M or F alone can have important clinical implications that would be masked by a dichotomous MF measure (Vroegh, 1971).

Although this operational separation of M and F has been hailed as the most significant contribution of the interest in androgyny, there are other, equally important differences between contemporary MF scales developed with androgyny in mind, and most of the older, more established MF scales. The most notable of these is a change in the criteria used to identify M and F. Until quite recently (Jenkins & Vroegh 1968), M and F were equated with sex differences, and items were only included in MF tests if they reliably distinguished men from women. The nature of these items varied from word association tasks, to ratings given on self-report questions (such as "I would like to drive a racing-

car, Yes or No"; the most varied of these tests in probably the Terman-Miles M-F test, Terman & Miles, 1936). We shall call this the sex difference approach to gender identity. Very different in nature are the three MF measures that epitomize the recent androgyny literature (the Bem Sex Role Inventory, or BSRI, Bem, 1974; the Personal Attributes Questionnaire, or PAQ, Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1975; and the Personality Research Form ANDRO Scale, or PRF, Kelly & Worell, 1976), which rely on expectations about men and women in selecting their M and F scale items. Someone who scores as highly M on such a scale is thus not necessarily doing what men typically do, but is doing what people think men typically do. In principle, that person is behaving in accordance with the male stereotype, and an androgynous person is combining aspects of stereotypically M and F self-presentation. This we shall call the sex stereotype approach.

Methodological differences aside, are there theoretical reasons for preferring one approach over the other? For instance, if a sex difference MF scale was altered so that separate M and F scales were derived from it, would it then be suitable for the measurement of psychological androgyny?

In principle, the sex stereotype approach is much more meaningful and less problematic than the sex difference approach, even though methodological and interpretive shortcomings have minimized its distinctiveness. To understand the reasons for the theoretical advantage of one approach over the other, a closer look at both is in order.

The aim of the sex difference scales, among which are the MMPI MF scale, the California Psychological Inventory Fe scale, and the Adjective Check List Sex Role scale, is to discriminate men from women, and their utility has been judged mainly in terms of how well they do this (Edwards & Abbot, 1973). If we take this criterion at its

word, the extent to which men ever score F on a scale, and women ever score M, can be taken as a precise estimate of the test's inefficiency. As the criterion becomes more sensitive, we define gender out of existence and we are left with what we had in the first place, i.e., sex groups. There are better ways of telling men from women!

Because the logic underlying the sex difference approach is lethal to it, the recent attempts to increase the flexibility of these instruments by separating the M and F scales (Beaucom, 1976; Heilbrun, 1976), must be seen as failures. A closely related source of dissatisfaction with the sex difference approach is that several factor-analytic studies (notably, Lunneborg & Lunneborg, 1970, and Lunneborg, 1972) have shown that there may be 10 or more factors underlying peoples' responses to the various scales, the majority of which do not discriminate men from women as ideally they should do. Estimates of the proportion of the variance in response to such tests due to sex differences range in the neighbourhood of 20% (Constantinople, 1973). Lunneborg (1972) suggests that at least some of the now unreliable items might at one time have differentiated men from women, but did so because of people's conformity to then prevalent sex stereotypes, (think of the racing car example given previously). As the stereotypes have evolved, many of the original items have become obsolete.

This idea that sex stereotypes are not simply the passive products of interaction, but may play an active role, through socialization and normative pressure, in the development of sex differences, is currently very topical (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Parsons, Ruble & Frieze, 1976; Sherman, 1976). While sealing the fate of the sex difference approach, it also suggests a way out of this logical and empirical cul-de-sac.

The sex difference approach relies on gathering as complete a picture as possible of sex differences in response to scale items. It has been shown several times that most of these sex differences are also part of the current sex stereotypes (Nichols, 1962; Lunneborg, 1970). That is, if people are asked to respond as they think men and women typically would, we find that almost all the items for which sex differences have previously been found, also appear as differences in what people think men and women would do. This overlap of sex stereotypes and sex differences can be seen as area B in Figure 3. The few sex differences in area A are not part of contemporary expectations and beliefs about the sexes, and thus are not important in most people's assessments of other people's gender identity. On the other hand, it has been repeatedly found that the number of items on which sex differences are believed to occur, even though they do not, is at least as great as those in areas A and B put together. The items in area C then, are salient aspects of sex stereotypes, but have no counterpart in actual sex differences.

From this it can be seen that sex stereotypes, which are the salient, and thus socially relevant, standards for M and F comparison, not only largely subsume most of the sex differences, but exaggerate and elaborate on them. Nevertheless, regardless of how much overlap there is between sex differences and sex stereotypes, it is the stereotypes, that is areas B and C together, that are applied in making everyday decisions about another person's M and F.

The sex stereotype approach to gender identity would thus ideally be concerned with finding the best way to estimate where in an MF space like that of Figure 1, an individual would be placed by other people. This makes explicit the way that we have been using the term "identity", to mean that social position attributed to someone by others. The notion of identity can also be used to refer to how individuals perceive

themselves in relation to their own idiosyncratic social categories. Undoubtedly, both types of identity have important consequences for individual mental health and behaviour. The pervasiveness, stability, and normative implications of sex stereotypes (Stoppard & Kalin, 1977; Williams, Giles, Edwards, Best & Daws, 1976) make it unlikely that large discrepancies between statistical or average sex stereotypes and individual stereotypes schemas will be common. It remains to be shown, however, that there is a close similarity between a person's self-placing in the MF space, and that attributed to him or her by others. In the development of measures that adopt some sort of stereotype approach, it has been assumed that people's self-ratings provide an accurate reflection of how they are seen in society. This has yet to be validated empirically, and is one aim of the present author's research. Before describing this research in more detail, a brief sketch of the history of the stereotype approach will set the scene.

In some senses, the labelling of a "stereotype approach" is setting up a straw man, for its development in the literature has not been seen in the context presented here. The adoption of a social consensus criterion for choosing MF items has not received as much attention as has the separation of the M and F scales. Nevertheless, a developmental trend is certainly discernable. It has its sources in research on the desirability of sex stereotypes carried out in 1968 by Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman & Broverman. These authors had men and women rate 122 seven-point scales, such as emotional, direct, appreciates art and literature, three times, for the concepts, "adult male", "adult female", and for "self". They found a very high level of agreement between men and women raters on the sex stereotypes, but they do not give us data on the degree of match-mismatch between the stereotypes and the raters' self-concepts. Instead, they opt for an

extension of the study, designed to assess the social desirability of the respective stereotypes. They do this by asking a new group of raters simply to indicate which pole of each item is more socially desirable in the population at large. Rosenkrantz et al, found that for 29 out of 41 highly stereotypic items in their questionnaire, the masculine pole was also the socially desirable pole. Whether this result was due to a masculine bias in the original item pool, or to an evaluative downgrading of the female stereotype as they suggest remains open to question.

Bem (1974), in developing the most widely cited androgyny measure, the BSRI, chose only socially desirable characteristics for her M and F scales. This strategy appears to be due to Bem's very specialized conception of M and F, rather than to a desire to avoid evaluative bias in constructing her scales. Bem defines the sex-typed individual as, "someone who has internalized society's sex-typed standards of desirable behaviour for men and women" (p. 155, our italics). The 20 M items on the BSRI were chosen from among a number of characteristics that were rated by both men and women as significantly more desirable for "an American male", than for "an American female". Examples of items on the M scale are athletic, masculine, and forceful, while cheerful, gentle and softspoken are on the F scale. There is no reference made in the operationalizing of M and F here to how typical the items are to either sex, just to how desirable they are. Because the items were initially culled from a large and loosely stereotypical pool, it is probable that they are stereotypic as well as desirable. But this is by no means necessarily so, for we can all think of characteristics that we would like to see in other people, but do not form part of our current impressions of them. Another point is that by limiting the standards of M and F to only desirable traits, Bem misses out on an important source of information, namely, self-description in socially undesirable terms.

Kelly & Worrel (1976) operate with definitions very similar to Bem's, in constructing the PRF ANDRO scale, selecting sex-typed, but desirable items on a rational-intuitive basis. Finally, the M and F scales of the PAQ, too, are based on a confounded stereotype measure. Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp (1975)), had students decide whether a number of items from the Rosenkrantz et al. questionnaire were more typical of men or women. But instead of using these ratings as a basis for their scales, they had a further group of students rate the items for the "ideal male" and the "ideal female". The final scales depend on whether the stereotypic ratings are congruent or not with the "ideal" ratings. We are not told how similar these are to the stereotype scales by themselves.

Whatever the reasons for the appearance of the social desirability criterion for scale construction, its introduction has meant that important parts of the sex stereotypes have not found their way into MF scales, and thus the bases for stereotypic MF classification are incomplete. As mentioned above, these scales also assume an isomorphism between a person's self-rating and the way they are seen by others. The present author is engaged in research designed to correct the limitations of the stereotype approach as it is practised, and to investigate the assumptions of isomorphism.

One hundred and sixty men and women rated 120 adjectives taken from previous MF scales, on seven-point scales for "men as you think they are today", "women as you think they are today", and for "myself". Each person later rated the adjectives, for men and women separately, for "how much approval-disapproval you think that men (women) would actually be met with today for acting in the manner described". Thus social desirability ratings were obtained quite separately from the stereotypes, and also for men and women separately. This procedure will permit a detailed examination of the relation between social

desirability ratings, stereotyping, and self-rating, that has not been possible using other procedures.

In this study, which will eventually have over 200 subjects, both men and women rated males as different from females on 94 of the 120 items. Table 1 gives the 30 most stereotypical M and F items. On only 20 items were men's self-ratings significantly ($p < .01$) different from women's. They are marked with an asterisk in Table 1. There was only one item, "solemn", which differentiated the sexes, but did not come out in the stereotypes. Men rated themselves as more solemn than women, even though they are not seen this way by each other. It is of interest to note that half of the subjects are university students, and half are non-students. Student-non-student differences were found on only seven scales, showing remarkable stability in the stereotypes, in different segments of the population.

Figure 4 illustrates that the extent of exaggeration and elaboration of the sex stereotypes over sex differences in this study is in the ratio of almost four to one. Of course, it remains to show what relation one's self-ratings bear to others' perceptions of one. Many of the questionnaire subjects also completed a 25 minute linguistic interview. Work now in progress involves examining how the judgements of a speaker's M and F by an audience of naive listeners, correspond to his or her self-ratings. While speech and vocal cues are only a part of the complex of signals that form the basis of impressions about others, they are certainly a most important part (see Giles, Smith & Giles, 1977). Still, this work is only a beginning.

Perhaps now we can see why, when setting out to talk about androgyny, getting there is half the fun, or the problem, depending on how you look at it. Before closing, a few points should be made about the scope and implications of the perspective adopted here. First, throughout this paper, we have been discussing M, F, and androgyny in highly abstract terms,

as they are measured on paper-and-pencil tests. It is evident that gender identity is expressed in a great many ways not tapped by rating scales. Speech is one that we have chosen to look at more closely in our own research.

Second, we have intentionally avoided discussion of the possible behavioural correlates of gender identity as defined here, and whether we should expect to find more or less consistent relationships than have been reported elsewhere (for example, Bem & Lenny, 1975; Bem, Martyna & Watson, 1976, Spence et al., 1975). The risk is that androgyny measures will quickly become subordinated as expedients in a search for "something more important", while theoretical and empirical discussion about gender identity takes a second seat.

From the present point of view, it is felt that continued elaboration of the relationship between sex stereotypes and male-female differences holds promise not only for the study of individual differences, but also for the whole field of male-female relations. In locating the source of discrepancies between sex stereotypes and actual sex differences, we can begin a detailed study of how beliefs and expectations about men and women influence, and are influenced by, objective differences between the sexes. That is, we can begin to study the mechanics of an intergroup belief structure, how and by whom it is maintained and changed. To give a very brief elaboration of what is indicated here, we can start by noting that a stereotype does more than act as a source of information about the group it caricatures. It also tells us where to look for more information about the group. By characterizing members of the group as, for example, B and C when they are really only B, the stereotype acts to shift our focus from exactly the group referred to, who are only B, to another group, most commonly a subgroup of the referred-to group, who are B and C. The masculine stereotype, for example tells us that

men are both more aggressive and boastful than women, even though there is evidence, let us say, that men are only more aggressive. The group to which we look for more information about men is probably those men who we see as most typical of men, i.e., those who are both boastful and aggressive. In this way, the stereotype acts to reinforce itself, and at the same time introduces distortion between sex differences and beliefs about them. Obviously, the source of the stereotype, or the group of people who fit it better than either sex, in this case, masculine individuals, will be an important source for change in the belief structures about men. Androgynous individuals, as a group, share characteristics stereotypic of both men and women. It would seem that their unique role in being able to double as part of the source group for both the M and the F stereotypes, is worthy of close examination.

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TABLE 1

MASCULINE STEREOTYPE ITEMS

*MASCULINE
*COARSE
DOMINANT
*HIDES EMOTIONS
AGGRESSIVE
*ARROGANT
*STERN
WILLING TO TAKE RISKS
STRONG
LOUD
BOASTFUL
AMBITIOUS
ACHIEVEMENT-ORIENTED
RECKLESS
TOUGH
LOGICAL
COMPETITIVE
DARING
EGOTISTICAL
FEELS SUPERIOR
ASSERTIVE
*RATIONAL
HAS LEADERSHIP ABILITIES
CONCEITED
OPINIONATED
ADVENTUROUS
*SEVERE
DIRECT
DECISIVE
HARSH

FEMININE STEREOTYPE ITEMS

*FEMININE
*EXPRESSIVE OF EMOTIONS
NEAT
*EMOTIONAL
GENTLE
*SENSITIVE
APPEARANCE-ORIENTED
NAGGING
WELL-GROOMED
SOFT-SPOKEN
*ATTRACTIVE
*APPRECIATIVE
FUSSY
HOME-ORIENTED
*WARM
*TENDER
UNDERSTANDING
TIMID
UNPREDICTABLE
THEATRICAL
*LIKES ART AND MUSIC
FEARFUL
HELPFUL
TACTFUL
CREATIVE
SUBMISSIVE
KIND
*EXCITABLE
MILD-MANNERED
*AFFECTIONATE

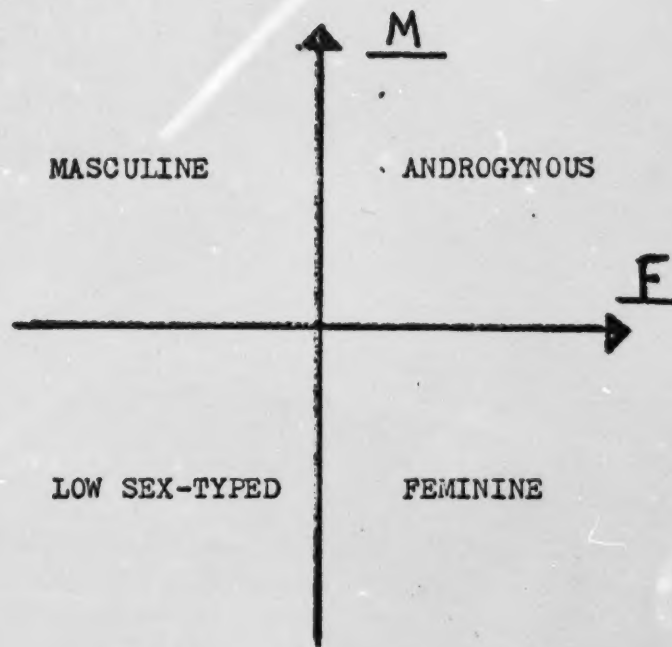


FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2

Sex

Stereotype

Items

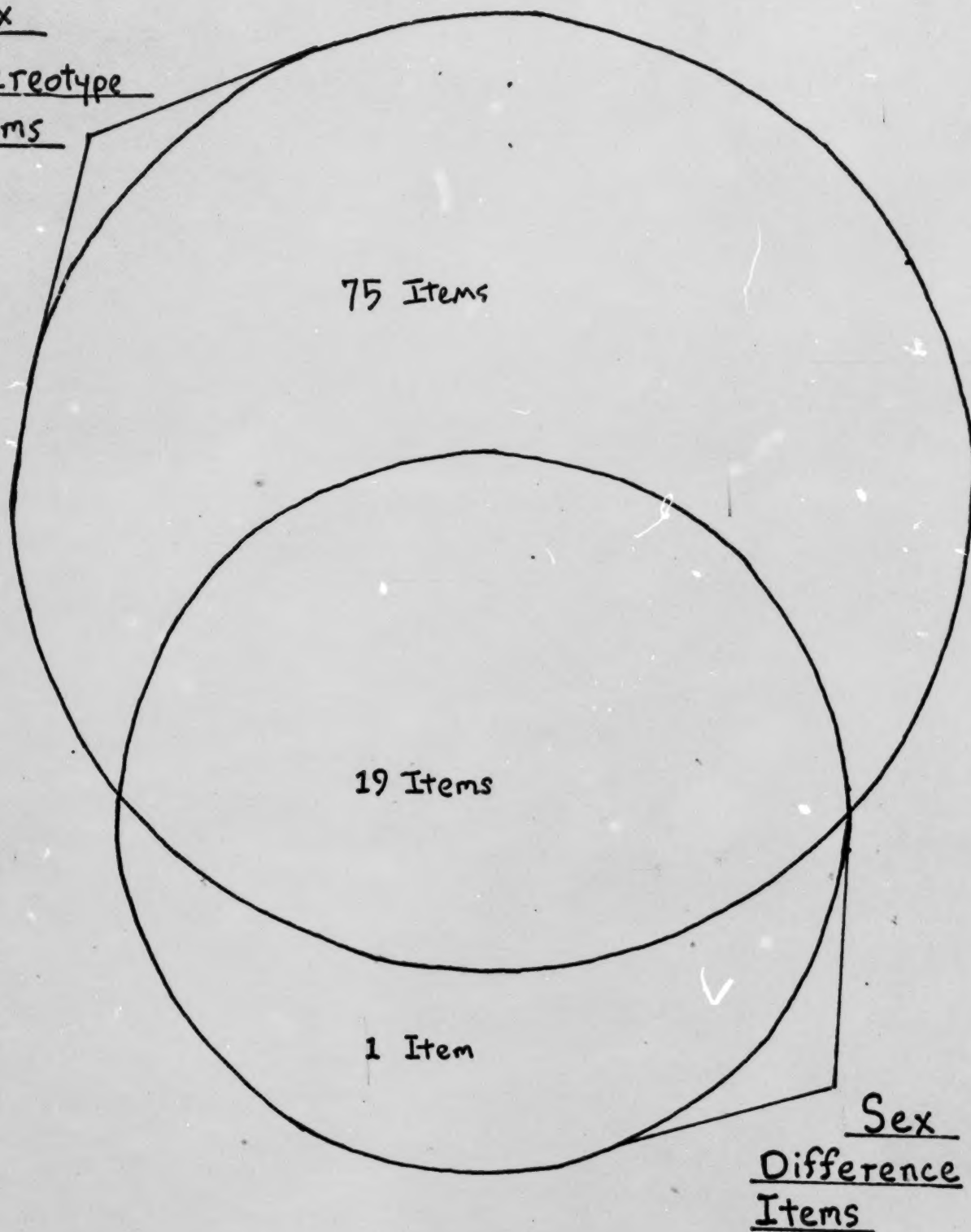


FIGURE 4

Sex
Stereotype
Items

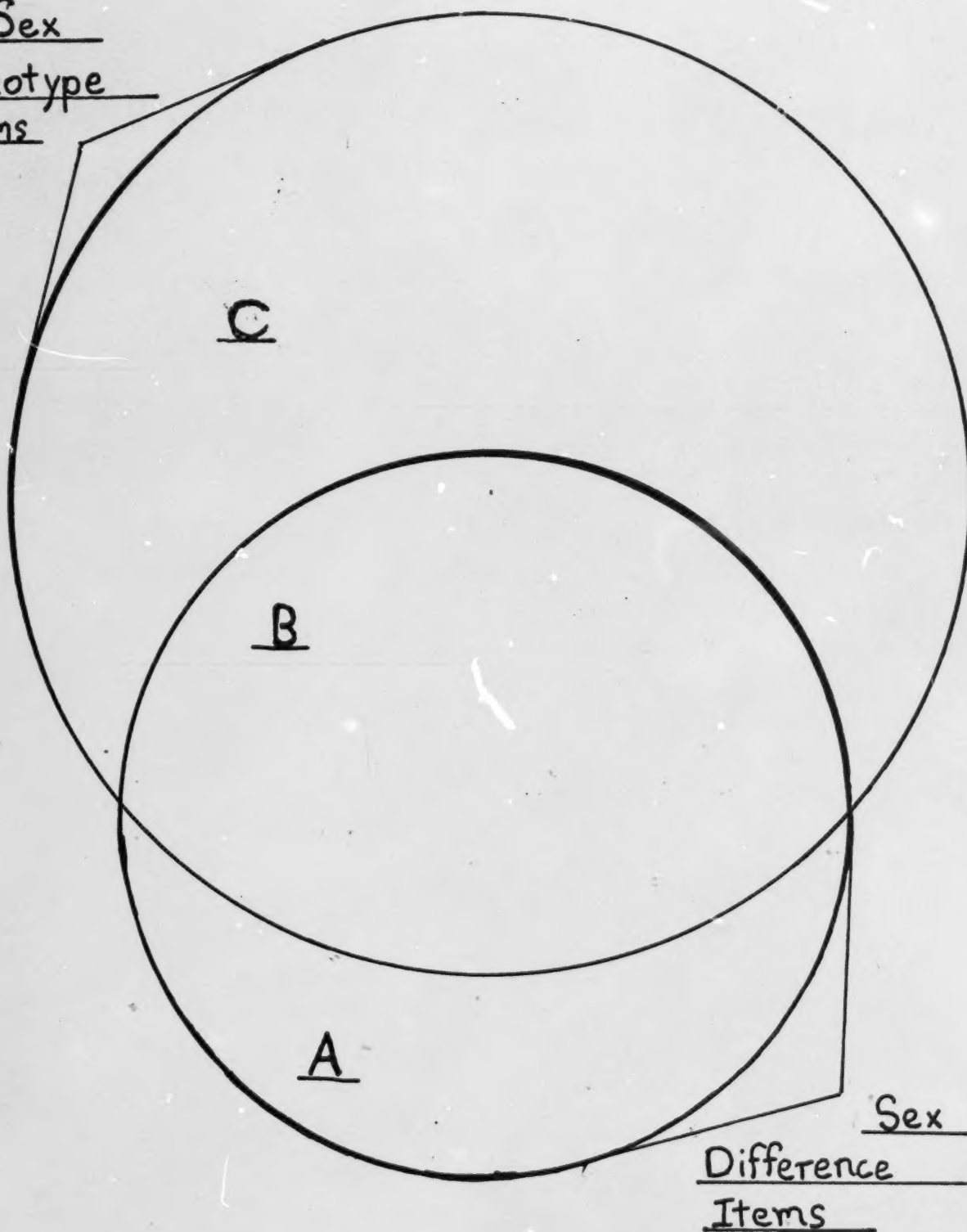


FIGURE 3